ABSTRACT
Twenty institutionalized mental patients, 18 of them with chronic schizophrenia, were given a preparation containing the total alkaloids of *Rauwolfia serpentina*. During the therapy period, improvement of the symptoms, especially of the psychomotor agitation, was seen in all but one patient. Twenty days after discontinuance of the therapy, marked improvement was present in 14 patients; the psychomotor agitation had disappeared; greater social and environmental interest was present in all; and, in one patient, a slight improvement in dissociation was present. However, the improvement that had been observed during the treatment period was no longer present in five patients at this time. The condition of one schizophrenic patient who had extreme depression and suicidal ideas was aggravated by the 30th day of the therapy; his suicidal ideas had become stronger and he himself had become extremely sitophobic. Although the therapy was continued, the patient did not improve. His condition was markedly improved by electroshock therapy. The effects obtained with the total alkaloids of *Rauwolfia serpentina* are comparable to those obtained with reserpine alone but with the former the side-reactions are none or very slight. The neurological symptoms of Parkinsonian type that are experienced subjectively and objectively by patients treated with reserpine alone were never observed in these patients, nor was water retention noted. The amount of reserpine present in the preparation of total alkaloids given to these patients was notably smaller (2.5 mg in 10 mg of the preparation) than that usually given when reserpine alone is used. The authors attribute to the other alkaloids present in *Rauwolfia serpentina* a therapeutic action on mental disease that is similar to that of reserpine.